

Devils Postpile Transportation Study

Section 1.0 General Purpose of Work

The Devils Postpile Transportation Study will provide crucial baseline data for near-term, inter-agency (Devils Postpile National Monument and Inyo National Forest) management decisions regarding visitor access and resource protection within the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin Valley (or Reds Meadow Valley). National level policy changes by the NPS and USFS in 2004 requiring acceptance of Golden and National Parks Pass holders make the existing (and previously financially viable) alternative transportation system inoperable without a subsidy or significant fare increase. In addition, current USFS fee demo authority is only authorized through 2005, requiring a change in management strategy. Both factors point to an uncertain future of the shuttle system. Although legislation currently in Congress may alter this situation, (providing USFS with 10 additional years of fee demo authority and eliminating the requirement to accept passes), there is still a need to fully understand how the existing shuttle influences visitor use patterns and impacts the area's natural resources.

Without the data-gathering proposed in this study, the two managing agencies will be challenged to select the best solution for a short-term management plan (two to five years) that will continue to protect natural resources while providing the public with a safe and enjoyable visit to Devils Postpile National Monument and the Reds Meadow Valley Recreation Area. This data is necessary to fully develop and analyze strategies for future visitor access policies and systems. Data will reveal how the shuttle relates to visitor experience and preservation of park resources and will provide the information necessary to develop performance measures to test the cost/benefits of the system. The study will provide the basis for developing alternatives to scoped through the process of the proposed General Management Plan for Devils Postpile.

Section 2.0 Background

The Reds Meadow-Devils Postpile mandatory shuttle has operated since 1979, protecting natural resources while safely carrying day-use visitors up and down the steep, narrow and winding road that provides the only vehicle access into and out of the Reds Meadow Valley. This area includes the spectacular glaciated canyon of the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin river, and envelopes Devils Postpile National Monument (including Devils Postpile and Rainbow Falls), portions of the Ansel Adams Wilderness, USFS Reds Meadow Recreation area, the Reds Meadow Resort and Pack Station, six campgrounds, montane meadows, lakes and countless opportunities for hiking, nature observation, relaxation, backpacking and fishing. The Reds Meadow Valley Recreation area is co-managed by the NPS and USFS. The two agencies work collaboratively to offer an exceptional, seamless experience for visitors to the area.

The number of private vehicles that can safely access the valley daily is limited due to the nature of the road (steep and only one and a half lanes wide for the first two and a half miles), and limited parking capacity in the valley. Therefore, the shuttle system allows a far greater number of visitors to access the area than would be able to if all visitors were driving private vehicles.

For fourteen years, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area (MMSA) operated the shuttle as a forest service permittee for the Inyo National Forest. Rising operating costs led to MMSA's continued request for transit fare increases. In 2002 the Inyo National Forest determined that the transit fare had climbed too high (\$9 per person with a proposed increase of up to \$15 per person), and decided to classify the Reds Meadow Valley as a fee demonstration recreation area. This designation allows the Forest Service to charge *all visitors* an equal access fee (previously only those who were on the shuttle bus paid the fee; exemption vehicles such as overnight campers, etc. were not assessed a fee). The Forest Service contracted with California Cruisers, a private bus operator, to operate the shuttle. The increase in revenues collected due to fee demonstration authority allowed the Forest Service to reduce the per person access fee initially to \$5 for adults (in 2002) and then, due to a deficit incurred in the initial year, to \$7 for adults (in 2003). In 2003 the

shuttle operated with a slight surplus.

The shuttle operation faces two potential major roadblocks due to national level policy. The USFS is scheduled to lose fee authority in 2006. If this occurs, the current management system will no longer be viable. In addition, during the winter of 2004, the Washington offices of the NPS and USFS determined that Golden Passports and National Park Passes should be accepted in lieu of access fees. This change in policy threatens the financial viability of the system. As a result, the Inyo National Forest projected a \$280,000 deficit for the 2004 operating season. To keep the shuttle operating in 2004, each agency agreed to commit \$140,000 out of pass sale revenue allocated to the Washington offices. In addition an NPS Transportation Advisory Group (TAG team) visited Devils Postpile in August 2004, and The National Park Foundation assigned a Proud Partner Transportation Scholar to the site for six months.

The TAG team, the Transportation Scholar, and Devils Postpile Superintendent are working productively and cooperatively with the Inyo National Forest to move toward finding solutions for this recently identified tenuous situation. Although analysis of 2004 operations showed that the revenue shortfall due to the pass acceptance policy was significantly less than \$280,000, realistic projections for 2005 show a potential shortfall of up to \$100,000. Significant resources have been allocated to address the problem and both agencies are committed to continuing the operation of what is currently believed to be the preferable way of providing visitor access to the area. Legislation currently in the U.S. House of Representatives may provide the USFS with 10 additional years of fee authority and eliminate the requirement to honor passes. Although this change may allow the shuttle to return to the 2003 (financially viable) operating model, there is still a significant lack of knowledge due to an absence of data. Without this information, the Inyo National Forest and Devils Postpile National Monument will be unable to determine the best use of resources and management strategies to achieve the goals of a high quality visitor experience combined with natural resource protection.

The strong partnership between Devils Postpile and the Inyo National Forest is a unique example of successful inter-agency cooperation to operate an alternative transportation system. Without the necessary resources to move forward in a fact-based decision making process, both the shuttle system and this partnership are potentially in jeopardy within the next few years. If the shuttle system ceases to operate under the current management structure and another strategy is not in place, vehicle (and therefore visitor) access to the area will have to be restricted and operated on a one-in, one-out basis. Previous experience with this method proved this scenario to be unpopular with the public and greatly reduce the number of visitors able to visit the valley. If new legislation allows the shuttle to continue operations without serious change, it will be important to assess the current shuttle operations to identify areas for improvement (fee structures, vehicle technology, check station operations, etc).

Section 3.0 Issues and Critical Concerns

- The current road alignment into the Reds Meadow Valley will not be altered significantly. Therefore, data is needed to determine the maximum vehicle capacity of the road to ensure visitor safety and continue to preserve natural resources.
- Visitor use patterns throughout the Reds Meadow Valley need to be understood to fully analyze the impacts of different visitor access management strategies to the valley in general, and specifically on the daily operations of Devils Postpile National Monument.
- An understanding of visitor use patterns combined with vehicle capacity of the road and parking areas will provide the information necessary to determine an overall vehicle and visitation capacity for the Reds Meadow Valley. Alternatives to the shuttle system may require a vehicle maximum to be enforced (e.g. one-in one-out, vehicle reservations, etc.). To implement these alternatives, it is necessary to have a vehicle cap number based on visitor use patterns and existing infrastructure.
- Annual visitation to the Reds Meadow Valley and Devils Postpile National Monument by private vehicle is calculated using a basic methodology and outdated and unsubstantiated conversion factor. Documentation is needed to confidently estimate visitation and understand the implications.

- Operation of any visitor access management system will include the operations of Minaret Vista Check Station to provide a minimum of traffic control and information dissemination. Operations of the check station should be analyzed to determine the most efficient use of staff time and resources.

Section 4.0 Scope of Services

Before initiation of the study, the DSC project manager, Devils Postpile and Inyo National Forest staff and the Contractor will work meet to discuss the scope of work, goals, logistics and timeline of the study. This group will serve as the Project Working Group and continue to collaborate throughout the duration of the study.

4.1 Existing Data: Collection & Review

The Contractor shall review previous planning documents prepared by the NPS and the USFS, as well as those prepared by other stakeholder organizations identified by the NPS. The following plans and documents shall be reviewed, at a minimum, by the Contractor:

- *TAG Trip Report – Devils Postpile National Monument*
August, 2004
- *Devils Postpile Strategic Plan*
- *Inyo National Forest Land Management Plan: Reds Meadow – Fish Creek*
- *Reds Meadow – Devils Postpile Shuttle: Background Information and Regional Context*
Devils Postpile National Monument and Inyo National Forest; December 2004
- *Eastern Sierra Public Transportation Plan Existing Conditions Report*
Kern Council of Governments; August 2004
- *Eastern Sierra Expanded Transit System (ESETS) Report*
- *The Economic Benefits of Wildlands in the Eastern Sierra Nevada Region of California*
The Wilderness Society; April 2002
- *Implementation Plan for Free Transit Service*
Town of Mammoth Lakes Public Works Department; July 2002
- *Reds Meadow Fee Demonstration Project*
Pacific Southwest Region, Inyo National Forest, Mammoth/Mono Lake Ranger Districts; March 2003
- *The Town of Mammoth Lakes Summer Visitor Survey 2002*
Town of Mammoth Lakes; September 2002
- *The Town of Mammoth Lakes Winter Visitor Survey Final Report 2002*
Town of Mammoth Lakes; June 2002
- *The Town of Mammoth Lakes Resident Housing and Transit Needs Assessment*
Town of Mammoth Lakes; 2002

The Contractor will work with the NPS to obtain and review all pertinent existing data from the park, the Inyo National Forest, shuttle contractor, county, state, tourism board and local governments related to transportation. In particular, this would relate to information for:

- Traffic volume and counts
- Shuttle schedules
- Regional tourism data and trends
- Visitation statistics
- Trail usage
- Local area public transit data
- Current regional and local government transportation plans
- Current operational expenses for shuttle contract, contract management, Adventure Center ticket sales and Minaret Vista Check Station operations

4.2 Existing Data: Analysis & Synthesis

The Contractor shall review available information including traffic counts, visitation and financial information from NPS, USFS and other pertinent sources and perform the following tasks:

- Analyze and summarize existing traffic count data for adequacy and identify any gaps.
- Analyze and summarize existing visitation data for adequacy and identify any gaps.
- Analyze and summarize existing financial information for adequacy and identify any gaps.
- Identify locations, types of frequencies of systematic counts (vehicle, visitor, revenue collection and expenses, etc.) needed for use in future planning and analysis of fee structure and collection, shuttle operations, roadway use and traffic control.

Deliverable: Analysis and Summary of Existing Data and Proposed Methodology for Collection of New Data Report (to be completed by 5/31/05)

4.3 New Data Collection

The Contractor will work with Devils Postpile National Monument and the Inyo National Forest to determine specific data needs for this planning effort. Data will need to be collected to develop an understanding of existing conditions regarding visitor use and multi-modal travel within park at both peak and off-peak season. This task will provide data that will allow the Contractor to:

- Document visitor use patterns within the valley (on shuttle, trails, roads, bus stops and parking lots)
- Analyze shuttle, check station and fee collection operations and costs
- Analyze fees and funding structure
- Define relationships between visitor access policies and visitor experience
- Identify educational and interpretive opportunities associated with transportation infrastructure and services
- Determine facility capacity of road, parking lots and other infrastructure
- Document impacts to natural resources of vehicles
- Identify and analyze safety issues (vehicle accidents, shuttle accidents, wildlife accidents, bear break-ins to vehicles, etc.)
- Develop and document partnership opportunities
- Assess vehicle technology options
- Analyze possibilities for coordination with other local and regional transit agencies

The Contractor will, at a minimum, utilize the following methods to obtain the data:

- Administer on-site surveys to the visiting public
- Conduct vehicle counts at Minaret Vista Check Station, entrance to Devils Postpile National Monument, campground entrances, Reds Meadow Resort, Rainbow Falls Trailhead, Sotcher Lake and Starkweather Lake
- Capture parking lot use and turnover data at Agnew Meadows, Devils Postpile National Monument, Rainbow Falls Trailhead, Sotcher Lake and Starkweather Lake
- Track visitor boardings and alightings at all shuttle stops throughout the system
- Meet with current Devils Postpile National Monument and Inyo National Forest staff and potential partners, regional and local transit providers, local government officials and other local stakeholders

The Contractor will determine additional critical data requirements and pursue data collection necessary to formulate visitor access management strategies and alternatives.

4.4 Socio Economic Data Collection

The Contractor will obtain socio-economic data on visitors to the Reds Meadow Valley by conducting a visitor survey. The surveys will be administered to visitors accessing the valley via shuttle and private vehicle at both peak and off-peak season periods. Socioeconomic data and other information gathered will include at the minimum:

- Visitor demographics (age, income, ethnicity, hometown, etc.)
- Visit information (length of stay, length of trip, purpose of trip, number in party)
- Travel mode (for trip into the Reds Meadow Valley, for entire trip, etc)
- Trip itinerary (locations visited within Reds Meadow Valley, other points if interested visited on same trip, etc)

4.5 Synthesize Data Collection Efforts

Existing data will be integrated with new data collected to create an Existing Conditions Report. This will provide baseline data for the creation and comparison of alternative visitor access management strategies.

Deliverable: Existing Conditions Report (to be completed by 10/31/05)

4.6 Site Analysis & Inventory

The Contractor shall conduct analyses of existing transportation infrastructure conditions throughout the Reds Meadow Valley. The analysis should include (but not be limited to) safety issues and capacity on the Reds Meadow Road, current bus turnouts and passenger waiting areas and all official parking areas within the valley. The inventory will provide parking capacity at each parking area.

The purpose of the site analyses shall be to identify and map existing problems and opportunities, and inventory existing site conditions. The site analyses shall also include meetings with Devils Postpile and Inyo National Forest staff to solicit relevant input. The work product of the site analyses shall include a set of site-specific problem statements and Plan Analysis Drawings.

Deliverable: Site Analysis & Inventory Report (to be completed by 7/31/05)

4.7 Visitor Use Forecasting

The Contractor shall develop forecasts of visitation, traffic volumes and shuttle ridership (if applicable) in the Reds Meadow Valley and Devils Postpile National Monument for 5, 10 and 20-year planning horizons. The forecasts should consider how growth might vary by month, with special attention to whether or not transit service would be needed during months of light visitation. Projected growth in the gateway community of Mammoth Lakes should be considered.

4.8 Land Use Inventory/Analysis

The following will provide a land use context for the visitor access management plan alternatives:

Site context plans (at a scale and scope as appropriate to):

Show the context of the Reds Meadow Valley and Devils Postpile National Monument relative to major landmarks and visitor attractions, major roads and transportation systems and visitor arrival points and flow patterns.

Existing site conditions plan:

Show site boundaries, topographic information, existing facilities, utilities, setbacks, easements, solar path, localized environmental influences, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, etc.

Site statement:

Describe site features, vegetation, climatic conditions, topography and drainage patterns, location and use of buildings, circulation patterns throughout site, security issues, site access, noise and visual considerations, archeological sensitivities, etc.

Deliverable: Site Context Plan, Site Conditions Plan and Site Statement (to be completed by 10/31/05)

4.9 Prepare Stakeholder Participation Plan

The Project Working Group will work with the Contractor to identify key stakeholders. The Contractor will organize and conduct in-person or telephone meetings with key stakeholders for the project. The Contractor will document information gathered in meeting summaries, and distribute to a Project Working Group. Key stakeholders likely to be included in this task include:

- Inyo National Forest
- Town of Mammoth Lakes
- California Cruisers
- Mono County
- Inyo Mono Transit
- Mammoth Lakes Visitor Bureau
- NPS--Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park, Yosemite National Park
- Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
- Mono County Board of Supervisors
- Reds Meadow Resort and Pack Station

Deliverable: Stakeholder Meeting Summaries (to be completed by 10/31/05)

4.10 Develop Project Goals/Objectives

At this point in the process, the Contractor shall conduct a workshop with the Project Working Group to present findings through data collection and analysis. The primary objective of the workshop shall be to ensure that transportation planning efforts are grounded in Devils Postpile National Monument and Inyo National Forest management goals and to develop an evaluation methodology prior to developing conceptual transportation alternatives.

The Contractor shall utilize input from the Project Working Group in the subsequent development and screening of a range of visitor access management alternatives, and will document workshop results in the draft and final report.

4.11 Alternatives Development

The Contractor will synthesize all data collected through the aforementioned processes to produce a number of visitor access management alternatives. The alternatives will provide management strategies for implementation and use during the subsequent two to five years. In addition, the alternatives will be available for integration into long-term alternative development and public scoping that will be undertaken during the course of the proposed Devils Postpile General Management Plan process to begin in 2006 or 2007.

4.12 Alternatives Analysis

The alternatives will be analyzed, to the greatest extent possible, in relation to the following:

- impact on visitor experience
- impact on natural resources
- visitation capacity
- cost to visitor
- public relations
- implementation
- overall cost of operation
- potential for integration with regional transit system

Using the above criteria, the Contractor will make a recommendation of a preferred alternative for the two

to five year horizon. The recommendation will be included in the Draft Report.

4.13 Prepare Draft Report

The Contractor shall refine alternatives and prepare an internal Draft Plan (10 copies) for review by the Project Working Group.

Deliverable: Draft Report (to be completed by 1/31/06)

4.14 Plan Review Process

The Project Working Group will have the opportunity to comment on the draft plan.

4.15 Prepare Final Report

The Contractor will revise the draft plan and report according to input received during the Plan Review Process.

Deliverable: Draft Report (to be completed by 2/28/06)

Section 5.0 Deliverables/Schedule

Summary Schedule and Milestone Tasks and Deliverables:

TASK	LEAD RESPONSIBLE AGENCY	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Project kick-off trip with Contractor	DSC	mid-April 2005
Data Review by Contractor	Contractor	April 2005
Scope Revisions, if necessary	DSC	May 2005
Analysis and Summary of Existing Data and Proposed Methodology for New Data Collection	Contractor	May 2005
Data Collection Initiated	Contractor	June 2005 (opening day)
Site Analysis and Inventory Report	Contractor	July 2005
Stakeholder Meeting Summaries	Contractor	October 2005
Existing Conditions Report	Contractor	October 2005
Project Working Group Workshop	Contractor	November 2005
Alternatives Generation	Contractor	December 2005
Draft Report	Contractor	January 2006
Final Report	Contractor	February 2006

NOTE: Preliminary schedule subject to change.

Section 6.0 Government Furnished Data and Resources

Devils Postpile National Monument and the Inyo National Forest will provide the Contractor with available documentation, preliminary studies, reports, surveys, and data pertaining to the project. The Contractor assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of such information or services and shall not be liable for errors or omissions therein. Provided information will include:

- Visitation data and methodology
- Vehicle counts
- Shuttle ridership

- Shuttle operating costs
- Minaret Vista Check Station operating costs and staffing schedules
- Adventure Center operating costs and staffing schedules

Section 7.0 Applicable Guidelines/Policies

Visitor surveys will be coordinated by DSC Project Manager to comply with GAO regulations.

Section 8.0 Project Roles and Responsibilities

The NPS will provide overall project direction and management. Devils Postpile National Monument will serve as the client, determining ultimate project decisions and guidance. The Denver Service Center (DSC) will support the park in its efforts and will provide project and contract management, assuring the Contractors meet the project requirements, milestones, and schedule while providing input on a periodic basis.

The Contractor will conduct tasks as outlined in Section 4.0 Scope of Services.

Section 9.0 Coordination/Communication

Before initiation of the study, the DSC Project Manager, Devils Postpile and Inyo National Forest staff and the Contractor will meet to discuss the scope of work, goals, logistics and timeline of the study. This group will serve as the Project Working Group and continue to collaborate throughout the duration of the study.

Section 10.0 Contract/Task Management

The Contractor shall prepare monthly progress reports detailing activities of the previous month. The progress report will summarize work completed on a task-by-task basis, budget status, schedule compliance, and key issues needing resolution and will be submitted directly to the DSC Project Manager.

Section 11.0 Project Commitment, Warranty & Professional Licenses

All principal parties involved are committed to providing quality services and products within budget and in a timely manner. We are dedicated to working in partnership as a means of focusing diverse ideas into an achievable product.

Any amendment to this Scope of Work that will affect the costs, scope, schedule, or successful completion of this project will be revised by the Project Working Group and then be approved by the Superintendent, Devils Postpile National Monument. The party desiring the amendment shall propose the change in writing to the DSC Project Manager. The subsequent discussion and decision shall be documented in a Scope of Work Amendment prepared by the DSC Project Manager. All proposed amendments shall be finalized within 15 working days from the receipt of the written proposal.

Section 12.0 Fee/Payment

No legal liability on the part of the Government for any payment may arise for performance under this contract beyond the amount that has been authorized through the issuance of written task orders.

Progress payments to the Contractor shall be made on the basis of proper and acceptable invoices submitted monthly for the actual percentage of services completed by the Contractor and shall be made in accordance with the provisions of Section I Contract Clauses except as follows:

Payments for not-to-exceed type services, when such services are authorized shall be made to the Contractor on the basis of monthly itemized invoices. Invoices shall include a description of the work performed and the cost for the month, broken down by discipline and labor hours. Invoices should also include receipts for actual direct expenses claimed, including travel expenses. Note: Proper invoices shall be received within 60 days after the work is performed. Invoices for work performed more than 60 days earlier than the date of the invoice will not be paid.

After completion of the work and as a prerequisite to the final payment on this task order, the Contractor shall furnish to the Contracting Officer a Release of Claims arising out of this Task Order. Such claims as are asserted by the Contractor and excepted from operation of the Release shall be listed in spaces provided after the word "except" and shall be referenced to correspondence or other identifying data, together with monetary amount for each major claim item.

The Contractor shall be paid for travel costs in accordance with the following:

Commercial carrier:	Current commercial coach or tourist rate, at cost
Car rental:	At cost, including gasoline
Subsistence and lodging:	Actual expenses, NTE prevailing Gov't. per diem rate, currently \$97.00 per day at (\$59.00/day lodging, \$38.00/day meals and other incidental expenses).
Mileage	\$0.34.5/per mile
Other Direct Costs	At cost

Original invoices are to be mailed directly to the National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Attn: _____, 12795 West Alameda Parkway, P.O. Box 25287, Denver, Colorado 80225

The sum of \$170,000 is obligated as the maximum total task order amount for all services required in this task order, and shall be allocated as follows:

- The Contractor shall be paid a firm-fixed fee of \$119, 000 (including labor and travel)
- The DSC Project Manager will be paid \$45,000 for support and management services (including labor and travel)
- \$3,000 will be allocated to printing and mailing of Draft and Final Reports
- \$3,000 will be allocated to the purchase of vehicle counters for the purpose of data collection

Section 13.0 Place/Period of Performance

Work outlined in this Task Order Scope of Services is to be executed between May 2005 and January 2006.